



DE-MINING AND MINE VICTIMS ASSISTANCE

The International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance is a non-profit organization established in March 1998 by the Slovenian Government with the aim of helping Bosnia and Herzegovina in its mine clearance and mine victims assistance efforts. In two years of its existence it spread its operations region-wide. ITF is at this moment working in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and FR Yugoslavia (Kosovo).

ITF headquarters are located in Ig. In addition to the main office ITF also opened an implementation office in Sarajevo and Zagreb.

ITF is financing demining and mine victims assistance activities in the region of South-Eastern Europe from the donations raised by ITF for this purpose. One of the reasons for the success and very good results of the ITF in the field of mine action in the region of South-Eastern Europe is the “matching fund” mechanism provided by the United States government. The “matching fund” mechanism means that every dollar contributed to the ITF triggers an additional dollar from the United States. This means that the effect of the original donation is in fact doubled as the matching fund is used for mine action activities in the region of South-East Europe. Until January 2002 ITF managed to raise altogether more than 75,7 million US dollars from the 23 donor countries and 25 donor organizations and companies.

The matching fund is not the only reason for the success of the ITF. The main advantages that contributed substantially to the evolution of the ITF into one of the most important players in mine action in the region of South-Eastern Europe are: close co-operation of ITF with the responsible authorities in the countries where ITF conducts its operations, cost-effectiveness, transparency and low cost of operations.

Until December 2001 ITF managed to clear more than 22,6 million square meters of mine and UXO contaminated land in the region of South-Eastern Europe. In the field of mine victims rehabilitation ITF rehabilitated more than 600 mine victims in the Slovenian Institute for Rehabilitation and the rehabilitation centers in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The regional component is a very important dimension of the ITF activities. We believe that regional co-operation is necessary and that this region can solve a lot of its problems more efficiently and also more cost-effectively if the countries in the region would help each other towards their common goal of mine-free land. The exchange of experience, information, excellence and know how is crucial in achieving these goals. ITF was thus the initiator of the establishment of the South-Eastern Europe Mine Action Coordination Council (SEEMACC) that includes the directors of the Mine Action Centers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Albania and Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

THE “TOGETHER” REGIONAL CENTRE FOR THE PSYCHOSOCIAL WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN

In cooperation with the non-governmental organisation Slovene Philanthropy and the City of Ljubljana, Slovenia is establishing a Regional Centre for the Psychosocial Well-being of Children – “Together”. The task of the centre is to step up cooperation, successful so far, between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Slovene Philanthropy in the field of human rights, particularly the rights of the child in armed conflicts.

The objective of the centre is to set up a framework for ensuring a comprehensive, continuous and organised approach to providing protection and psychosocial assistance for children affected by the wars in South-Eastern Europe and to developing professional and social concepts linking the psychosocial wellbeing of the individual to social recovery and development.

By establishing the centre, Slovenia wishes to contribute its share to the psychosocial well-being and improvement of the mental health of children affected by armed conflicts in South-Eastern Europe. Slovenia believes that social reconciliation in the region depends on the psychosocial profile of the younger generations. We would like to offer our expertise and experience in the field of children’s mental health and our in-depth knowledge of the situation, culture and tradition in the region, and to pool the available resources of the international community to the benefit of children.

The centre will be engaged in promoting better contact between people and organisations active in the field of psychosocial assistance and in collecting the resources required for the development and implementation of programmes in the region, taking the needs of the region into consideration by actively involving local communities in the programmes. Through its activities the centre wishes to assist traumatised children in the region in a more effective way, ensuring better conditions for the psychosocial development of children after the end of armed conflicts and in the accompanying social crisis and, through these approaches, to contribute to human security and stability in the region.

Although the centre has not yet been formally established – it is expected that the registration procedure will be concluded early this year – its activities are already underway within Slovene Philanthropy. The centre will function on the basis of the Slovene Philanthropy’s ten years of experience in the field of psychosocial assistance in South-Eastern Europe. To carry out its activities it will use the network of cooperation developed by the Slovene Philanthropy in South-Eastern Europe, particularly the centres that form part of the “social reconstruction network in the former Yugoslavia”.